

Chasing Cattle Thieves in the Flint Hills in 1899

by Jim Hoy

More than just a plot device of B-Western films, cattle rustling is an ever-present hazard of the livestock business in the ranching West. Modern rustlers use pickup trucks and stock trailers to transport cattle instead of driving them overland from horseback as in earlier times, but the threat to cattle raisers in the Flint Hills is as real today as it was during the last decade of the nineteenth century when a number of Flint Hills cattlemen met in Emporia in 1894 to organize the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA). One anti-rustling measure the organization employed in those early years was to engage the services of Thomas Furlong, a detective from St. Louis, Missouri. The plan was for Furlong, or more likely one of his operatives, to act as an agent provocateur and thus infiltrate a suspected gang of cattle thieves in Chase County. A copy of the written report resulting from this venture, itself nearly the lone document to have survived the first fifteen years of KLA's existence, provides some fascinating insights

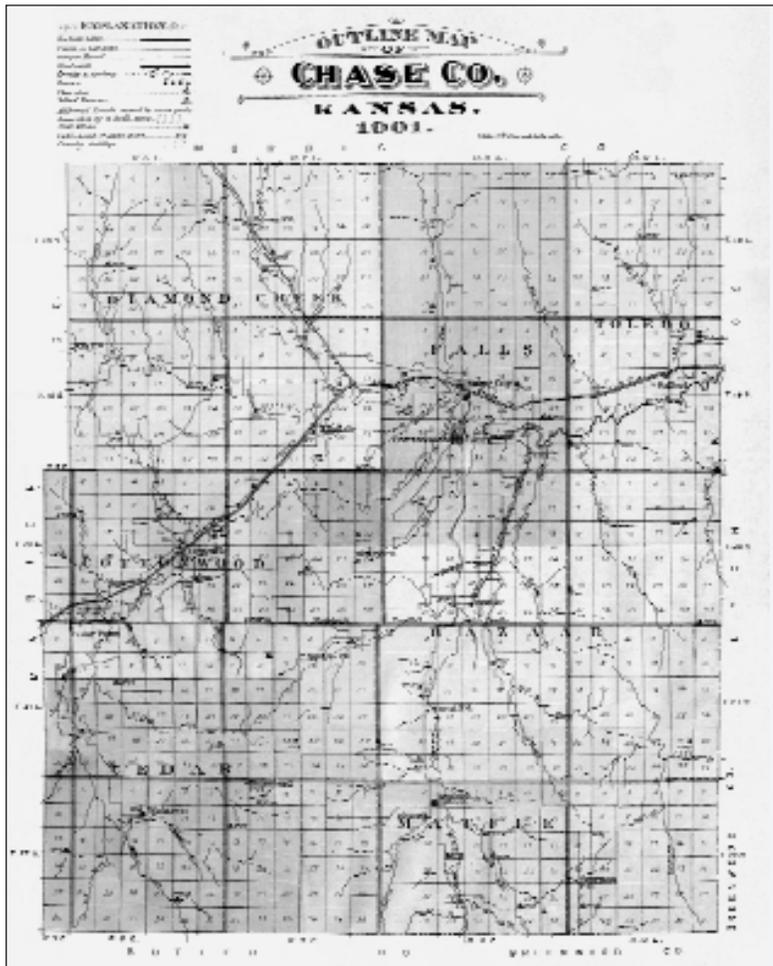
*Jim Hoy is professor of English and director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at Emporia State University. His chief interest is the folklife of ranching, both historical and contemporary, in various parts of the world, with special emphasis on the Great Plains and particularly the Flint Hills of Kansas. He is the author of *Cowboys and Kansas: Stories from the Tallgrass Prairie* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).*

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Cattle graze in Flint Hills pastureland in Chase County.



A 1901 map of Chase County showing Bazaar, Matfield Green, Strong City, and Cottonwood Falls, in the southeastern part of the county where Furlong's detective worked.

to three hundred pounds or more by mid-July. Shipping would begin at that point and continue throughout the remainder of the season. Every few weeks the fattest steers in any one particular pasture would be sent to market by rail a few carloads at a time, leaving the remainder of the herd in the pasture to continue to eat and gain weight. This process of intermittent shipping would continue until, by mid-October, all the cattle had been shipped.

Although railroads had begun to penetrate the Flint Hills as early as the later 1870s, it would be well into the twentieth century (1923) before the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway would lay track through and beyond the central core of the Flint Hills (which encompasses southern Chase, northeastern Butler, and northwestern Greenwood Counties), extending the route beyond Bazaar, which had received a spur of the Santa Fe and an extensive system of stockyards in 1887.

Thus, when the detective retained by the KLA reached Bazaar in the middle of August 1899, he was arriving at the height of shipping season at what was at the time the largest cattle-shipping point on the Santa Fe railroad. The operative seems to have had some experience with horses and cattle; it is evident from his report that he was familiar with the process of bedding (that is, shoveling sand into) stock cars, driving cattle, and loading them onto trains, and he seems more than comfortable with horses.

The Kansas Livestock Association was founded in Emporia, although the circumstances, including the exact date, are not fully clear. Prior to 1894 some half dozen regional organizations that preceded the KLA had been formed around the state, beginning with the Western Kansas Cattle Growers Association in 1883. Major concerns of these short-lived groups, as with the KLA, included rustling, stricter quarantines for Texas fever, and breed improvement, although the immediate problem that brought a group of cattlemen from a dozen Flint Hills counties to Emporia on May 15, 1894, was what they considered an un-

into Flint Hills history and is reproduced on the following pages. First, however, a little background on Flint Hills ranching, the KLA, and Thomas Furlong is in order.

It was sometime during the summer of 1899 that the KLA retained Furlong's Secret Service Company to discover the identify of the cattle thieves who were plaguing Chase County.¹ Chase County lies in the heart of the Flint Hills and the bluestem grazing region of Kansas. As early as the big Texas-to-Kansas cattle drives following the Civil War, cattlemen had recognized the value of the tallgrass prairie for adding weight cheaply and efficiently to stocker cattle. In 1899 the major mode of ranching in the Flint Hills was pasturing aged Texas steers for a six-month summer grazing season that began about mid-April. Thin cattle that had arrived from Texas in the spring could gain up

1. Information about Thomas Furlong is from his book *Fifty Years a Detective* (St. Louis: C.E. Barnett, [1912]).

justified increase in railroad shipping rates. According to the late Charles Wood, an Emporia meeting of the Central Kansas Cattlemen's Association held in February 1894 may have constituted the initial meeting of what became the KLA. Wood, however, believed a more likely founding date of the KLA was August 1897, when the *Emporia Daily Gazette* announced the new organization. In addition to freight rates and quarantines, the third major concern discussed at the 1897 meeting was the problem of cattle theft.²

Given this concern, along with the notoriety of the Kansas cases handled by the Furlong agency in the latter years of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the newly formed livestock organization engaged the services of the well-established St. Louis firm. One would like to think that Furlong, rather than an operative, undertook the investigation. Given his proclivity to assume disguises and to become personally involved in particularly adventure-some cases, it is easy to imagine him posing as a cowboy to infiltrate the gang of rustlers. Moreover, the copy of the report in the KLA files is marked "s/ Thos. Furlong," which suggests that Furlong himself had signed the original document, whether or not he had written it. It seems certain, however, that the case was assigned to, and the report written by, an operative. The straightforward, literate prose of Furlong's book and the meticulous thoroughness of his investigative style do not square with the colloquialisms and grammatical infelicities, the numerous typographical errors, nor the misspelled names of persons and the misidentified geographical locations found in the report. Nor does it seem likely, considering his success in undercover work, that Furlong in disguise would so easily have been found out had he been the detective. Most convincing, however, is that at one point the investigator refers to his brother-in-law, who lived four miles east of Emporia; there is no extant record of Furlong having a family member in Kansas. Whoever this operative was, his name most likely will remain unknown.

Thomas Furlong, born in New York in 1844, served during the Civil War as a member of the Pennsylvania Bucktails (Company G, First Pennsylvania Rifles). According to the title page of his 1912 publication *Fifty Years a Detective*, Furlong commenced his "long and

strenuous career . . . on September 13, 1862, when he was detailed from his company . . . for special service." In civilian life that career continued when he was named the first chief of police of Oil City, Pennsylvania, in 1871. By 1874 he had become chief special agent for the Allegheny Valley Railroad. In 1880 he moved to St. Louis and organized the Furlong Secret Service Company, at the same time working as chief special agent for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, which was part of the Gould railway system. Other Gould lines for which he worked during that decade included the International and Great Northern, the Wabash, and the Missouri, Kansas and Texas. In 1891 he incorporated his company and, although still heavily engaged in railroad work, seems to have severed official ties with the Missouri Pacific.³

The agency flourished. By 1912 the company had established branch offices in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Houston and had operatives and correspondents not only in major U.S. cities but in foreign countries as well. As the business grew, so did its administrative structure. At the home office Furlong served as president and general manager, assisted by a vice president and assistant general manager, a secretary and treasurer, and a superintendent of operatives. Furlong attempted to maintain a high degree of integrity by refusing both divorce cases and rewards, which he believed could have a corrupting influence on investigators and prosecutors. As the company grew and more operatives were hired, Furlong of necessity would have become less personally involved in field operations; nevertheless, his book suggests that he maintained a keen interest in the cases his agency handled, even in later years. The thirty-one cases he recounts, ranging from murder to train robbery, covered a wide time span and geographical area: from 1872 to 1910 and from Pennsylvania to California, Mexico into Canada. Although he preferred apprehending his quarry nonviolently, several times he was forced to subdue large and dangerous opponents by physical force or at gunpoint. Once he successfully avoided being thrown overboard by a fugitive he was transporting by sea from Portland, Oregon, to San Francisco. Furlong used informants, and sometimes he went undercover with

2. Charles L. Wood, "Cattlemen, Railroads, and the Origin of the Kansas Livestock Association—the 1890's," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43

(Summer 1977): 121–39; Jim Hoy, *Riding Point: A Centennial History of the Kansas Livestock Association* (Fargo: North Dakota State University Institute for Regional Studies, 1994).

3. Furlong, *Fifty Years a Detective*.



ORGANIZED 1880. INCORPORATED 1891.

FURLONG'S Secret Service Company.

THOS. FURLONG, Manager. B. C. APPELEGATE, Superintendent. E. J. DAWSON, Secretary.

1406-7-8 Chemical Building, ST. LOUIS, MO.

TELEPHONES: BELL, MAIN 779; KINLOCH, A471.

WE DO A GENERAL DETECTIVE BUSINESS.

Thomas Furlong organized his secret service company in St. Louis in 1880. The above advertisement is from the St. Louis Directory for 1902.

an assumed name (Foster was a favorite). One case in Missouri required him to operate a locomotive engine to foil a train robbery, while another time, in Pennsylvania, he pretended to be an oil-well driller. Once, near Vinita, Indian Territory, he rented a horse from a livery stable and passed himself off as a drifting horseman. Furlong prided himself on the thoroughness of the intelligence he gathered, once winning the cooperation of a suspect by telling him, "I can tell you how many cigars you have smoked, how many drinks you have taken, whom you have talked with, and what you talked about."

Several of Furlong's cases had a Kansas connection. In 1884, for instance, Furlong trailed a suspect from Texas to Emporia and Topeka before finally apprehending him. Two years later Furlong employed several operatives, including a double agent, in infiltrating a Knights of Labor local in Kansas City, Kansas, some of whose members were accused of wrecking a train. (According to Furlong, this case ultimately led to an offer by President Benjamin Harrison to assume the position of chief of the United States Secret Service, but protests from the Knights of Labor delaying the appointment caused Furlong to withdraw his name.) In the last years of the nineteenth century and first few years of the twentieth, Furlong and one of his favorite

operatives, D. F. Harbaugh, solved a case involving a ranch near Falls City, Nebraska, the inheritance of which was disputed by some relatives in northeast Kansas. (By 1912 Harbaugh had left Furlong's employ to become a ranch manager, working for the inheritor of the Falls City ranch.)

The exact circumstances that led the Kansas Livestock Association to retain Furlong's services are unknown, but perhaps the organization became aware of his work through another Kansas case, an 1898 murder in Topeka in which John Collins, a twenty-one-year-old student at the University of Kansas, shot his father. Furlong examined the murder scene, sending an operative, J. S. Manning, to interview young Collins's classmates in Lawrence. The prominence of the victim and the speed with which Furlong solved the case most likely attracted the attention of KLA officers.

The text of the report follows, printed verbatim, and is succeeded by commentary.⁴

4. The seven-page report in the KLA files is a copy of the original, which is typed, double-spaced on onionskin paper, and contains occasional mistyped or misspelled words. Biographical information about individuals named in the report is from the Kansas State Census, 1895, Chase County; the U.S. Census, 1900, Kansas, Chase County; the Chase County Sheriff's Department; and the author's personal knowledge.

Incorporated
FURLONG'S SECRET SERVICE CO.
Chemical Bldg., Saint Louis
Thos. Furlong, Manager
Oct. 16, 1899

Cattlemen's Protective Association⁵
Gentlemen: On August 13th I met Mr. Harbaugh at Emporia, Kansas, and received instructions from him to go to Bazaar and Matfield Green, Kansas, and try to get in with Harry Bramley [Brandley].⁶ My excuse for being there was that I was a cow puncher out of a job, and had left the country I belonged in on account of some trouble and had come out here to hide out. I was also instructed by Mr. Harbaugh to get in with a Dutchman who works for Harry Bramley and try to work him. I was to get a job at breaking some Texas horses that Harry Bramley had. I was also instructed that Beecock [Bocook] Bros. would be good parties to get in with, also a butcher by the name of Baker whose boy worked for Harry Bramley. I was instructed to go to Bazaar first as there was a chance to get acquainted there as the cow men all came there to load cattle and they were shipping out at this time. I left Emporia on August the 14th and went to Strong City where I stayed all night.⁷ On the evening of the 15th I went to Bazaar. I met a man named Frank Gaddy [Gaddie]

5. The incorrect name of the association is further evidence that the report was written by an operative rather than by Furlong.

6. Yost Harbaugh, born about 1858, lived in the Toledo community in eastern Chase County near the Lyon County border. It is more likely that the reference is to D. F. Harbaugh, one of Furlong's most trusted operatives. Harry Brandley, born 1874, was the elder son of Henry Brandley, a Swiss immigrant who had settled in Chase County in 1859 and by 1899 was one of the largest landholders and stockmen in Chase County. With Elizabeth Romigh, whom Henry married in 1870, he fathered eight children, in the following order: Clara, Maud, Harry, Ruby, Daisy, Pearl, Robert, and Flora. According to the U.S. Census, 1900, Kansas, Chase County, Harry had been married for four years. Also listed in his household in that census are Carl Fischer, age twenty-eight, farm laborer; and George Mosher, age twenty, stock herder. Emporia is the county seat of Lyon County, about twenty miles east of Cottonwood Falls, the county seat of Chase County. Bazaar, about eight miles south of Cottonwood Falls, was a major cattle shipping point on the Santa Fe railroad. Matfield Green is about eight miles farther south of Bazaar. See U.S. Census, 1900, Kansas, Chase County.

7. Most likely the "Dutchman" was Carl "Dutch" Fischer, twenty-eight-year-old son of German immigrants, who was one of two hired men living in the Harry and Matie Brandley household in 1900. Fischer later

who runs a boarding house at Bazaar and went over to his house and engaged board, agreeing to pay him one dollar a day. The next morning I went around the town inquiring for work and in the evening I helped to load some cattle into cars, showing that I knew what cattle was and how to handle them. I got acquainted with Bun Grover, who keeps a joint, and told him that I wanted a job with some cattelman and asked him to help me. I stayed around Grover's joint as all the cattlemen and punchers visited there when in town and whenever there were cattle to load I would go over to the pens and help load them. In this way I got acquainted with the cattlemen. Amongst these were Bill Finney, Len Muer and Run [sic] Grover, the joint keeper. I also got acquainted with the blacksmith who beds down the cars and when I helped to load cattle on several occasions, he would always buy the boys a drink after they got through loading.⁸ I remained around Bazaar and Matfield Green nearly all the time between August the 15th and September the 13th, when I went to Emporia to meet Mr. Harbaugh. During this time I got acquainted with Harry Bramley and the Dutchman who works for him, and the Dutchman got pretty full one night in Bazaar and some of the boys took him home and I thought for fear he would say something. He said he was going over to Emporia to the circus which was September 12th and that was the reason I wanted to get to Emporia as I thought by getting him away from home I might get something out of him.

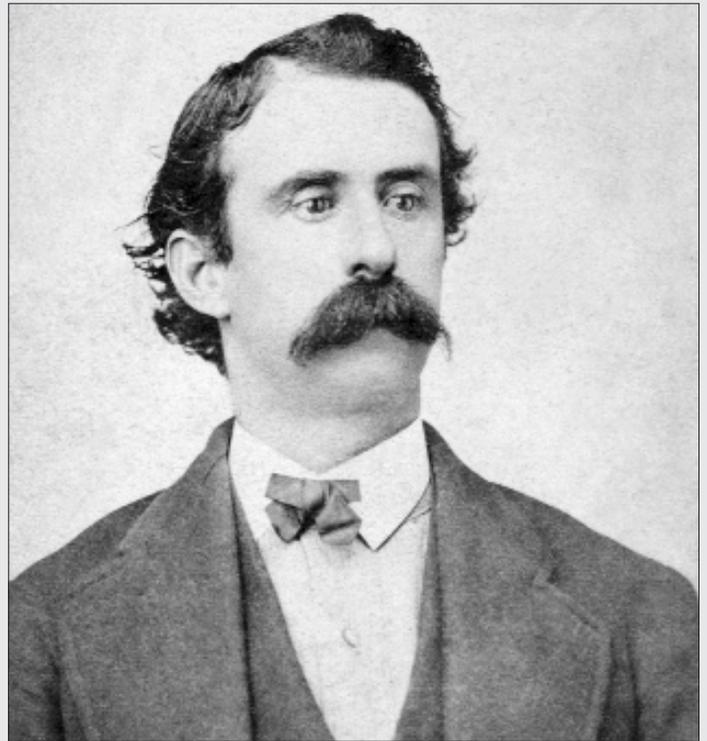
I told Bun Grover, the Joint keeper, that I

moved to Cassoday where he operated an icehouse (gathering ice from the nearby Walnut River), a butcher shop, and an ice cream parlor. Evander Bocook was a harness maker and stockman, born 1865, living in Matfield Township in 1900. His brother Newt was a stockman, born 1874, living in Bazaar Township in 1900; he later lived at Matfield Green and became a major cattelman in the area. Henry Baker was a butcher in Matfield Green, sixty-three years old in 1900. Willard Baker, age eighteen, is listed as a farm laborer in the U.S. Census, 1900, Kansas, Chase County.

8. Frank Gaddie, born 1865, lived in Bazaar with his wife and family in 1900. In addition to operating a store, livery barn, and boarding-house, Gaddie also was involved in the cattle business. Bunion "Bun" Grover, a stock herder born in 1877, lived in Bazaar in 1900, the year he married his wife, Alpha. Bill Finney, a stockman born in 1872, was single in 1900 and boarding with Frank Gaddie in Bazaar. Len Muer is unidentified. In 1895 a blacksmith surnamed Fosdick, thirty-six years old, and one named L. C. Stewart, thirty-eight, both lived in Bazaar. In 1900 two blacksmiths lived in Bazaar: John McCabe, age thirty-nine; and Benjamin Bunn, age thirty-five.

was getting about broke and thought I would go over to Emporia to the circus, and maybe I'd get hold of some money there. He said, "You come back and maybe we can get hold of some money here." There was a doctor who came there from Cottonwood Falls with a woman that night.⁹ The doctor was drinking. He left and was to come back the next night. The joint keeper, Bun Grover, said, "The doctor has a roll on him and if you are game I can fix him and you and Frank Gaddy get the money. I agreed to do it. Bun Grover was to give him a knockout drop in his whiskey. Frank Gaddy was to watch out while I got his money. The doctor did not return but this made me solid with Bun and Gaddy. I shot craps around Bun's place and shook dice with the boys and got the reputation of being a gambler.

There was no conversation any time between themselves or with me about any cattle stealing or any robberies but I kept on saying I was about broke and had to make some money some way. I did this to give them a chance to spring something if they would. As stated before, I came over to Emporia about September 10th to meet Mr. Harbaugh and reported to him all I knew, and received instructions to go back. While over there at Bazaar I learned that Sam Slother [Stotler?] and Lew McCray were killing cattle on the Verdigris river in the Comet [Camp] Creek pasture. I left Emporia on September 13 as none of the boys from Bazaar or Matfield Green came over to the circus, except Bob Bramley and went over to the circus with him, and we had a few drinks.¹⁰ I told him I was going back to Bazaar to try to make some money. He said I ought to make some money. He said, "You ought to get in with the Beecoaks." I told him that I did not get acquainted with them. I told him I would like to get in with some one who had nerve enough to go out and get ahold of



some money. He said that Vandaver and Nute Beecock [Evander and Newt Bocook] had nerve enough to go out and do anything. I said, "Can't you get me in with them?" He said, "We ain't on very good terms but you go to Mel Herring, the postmaster at Matfield Green, and he will fix you all right with them." I left my brother-in-law's place, which is four miles east of Emporia, on one of his horses and went to the Verdigris to John Hickes [Hicks] and I thought I could get acquainted with Sam Slother, as Hickes' place joins with Slothers on the east. I went out into the Camp Creek pasture and rode around in this and adjoining pasture for four days, thinking that I might run on to them killing beeves. I saw fresh beef at Sam Slother's house, which was about all that would indicate they were killing cattle. I left and went to Bazaar where I learned that Nations had that pasture, and was not a member of

9. Three of the four physicians listed in the 1900 census as living in Cottonwood Falls were married. Most likely the man referred to in the report was John M. Harmine, a thirty-five-year-old osteopath, who was single and living in a boardinghouse.

10. Sam Slother and Lew McCray are both unidentified, although Slother possibly is Sam Stotler, who, according to an article in the *Chase County Leader* (Cottonwood Falls), October 19, 1899, lived "near the county line on the Verdigris." The Verdigris River rises in southern Chase County and flows into the Arkansas River in Oklahoma. Camp Creek

flows into the Verdigris in southeastern Chase County. Zebulon Pike is reputed to have camped at the juncture in his exploratory mission of 1806, thus giving the stream its name. Bob (Robert) Brandley, born 1882, was the younger son of Henry and Elizabeth Brandley, with whom he was living in 1900.



Henry Brandley (facing page) settled in Chase County in 1859 and by 1899 was one of the largest landholders and stockmen in the county. The detective retained by the KLA became acquainted with two of Henry's sons, Robert (pictured above, right) and Harry.

the Association. So I did not return there. I then went to Matfield Green and got board at Handy's.¹¹

I tried to get acquainted but everybody seemed to be afraid [sic] of me. One day a man was looking for a man to cut kaffir corn and I offered to go but he said I was a stranger and he would not hire a stranger. I got acquainted with Mel Herring, the postmaster, who was about the only one who would talk to me. Nute Beecock jumped me one morning and asked me what I was laying around there for and I told him I was looking for work. He did not make any reply but turned and walked away. I wanted to catch A.P. in town as I had been instructed to see him and make myself known to him.¹² On Saturday, September 23rd, I saw A.P. and made myself known to him, and arranged for him to buy a horse for me. I told around that I

11. Mel Herring, born 1868, was a farmer and postmaster living in Matfield Green in 1895. John Hicks, born 1850, was a farmer living in Matfield Township in 1895 with his wife, eight children, and a stock herder, George Mosher. The Nation family ranched (and still own pastureland) near Camp Creek in southeastern Chase County. William Handy was a farmer, born 1854, living in Matfield Green in 1900 with his wife, three children, one hired man, and two boarders.

had bought a horse, and on Monday A.P. brought the horse to town for me. After I got the horse I went to Bazaar and back to Matfield Green, out in the pastures and around as if I had plenty of business. Before I got the horse and while at Bazaar, Bun Grover, the joint keeper, said, "If you and Bill Finney get Len Muer to go in, I will go in with you and we will get a couple of cars of cattle and ship them in Muer's name, and we can all get some money." I said that I did not know him well enough to approach him on that kind of subject, and Finney said, "You see him, Bun, and see what he says about it." Then is when I wanted a horse and I said I would buy a horse, so, as stated, I went to see A.P. about getting it. A few days after I got the horse I was over at Bazaar and Bun said, "I have that all fixed." So he and I went to the pasture on Sharp's creek and saw the cattle.¹³ They were branded J.A.

We then rode over the road to Grand Summit where we were to drive the cattle to ship from. Bun said the cattle would be shipped in Len Muer's name. During this time Bun, Bill Finney and I had the first talk about shipping these cattle. John Blackmore brought some cattle and could not get them into the pens as they were full of cattle.¹⁴ So they herded them out on the prairies and they lost some on account of the cattle straying. About twelve o'clock, midnight, the pens were emptied and they put what they could round up into the pens and shipped them out. The next morning some of the cattle were on the town site and Bill Finney and I gathered them

12. A.P. most likely is Axel R. Palmer, born in Sweden and fifty-two years old in 1895. Palmer lived with his family in Bazaar Township. His son Carl, age seventeen in 1895, became a well-known cattleman in Chase County.

13. Sharp's Creek is a stream in eastern Chase County that flows into the South Fork River.



Joe Mercer was a stockman living in Bazaar Township and served as secretary of the Kansas Livestock Association from 1910 to 1937. Mercer was involved in the plan to expose the cattle thieves in the area.

other calf and shipped it with Mercer's, Mercer agreeing to give the money to Gaddy who offered to give me my share of the calf money. Bun Gover [sic], Bill Finney and I agreed to go to the pasture and meet Len Muer and we were to round up about two carloads, drive them to Grand Summit and ship them. I talked it all over with Bun Grover and Bill Finney and met Len Muer and asked him if he and Bun Grover had had a talk about a cattle deal, and he said they had and that everything was all right as far as he was concerned. I then talked with Bun and Bill and we agreed to ship them sometime about the 1st of October. I went and told A.P. as I had been instructed to tell him, so that he could make the arrangements to have the sheriff there to arrest the parties, and he said he would be awfully busy, and that I should let Mr. Harbaugh know. I then told A.P. to write to St. Louis and what to write. I then went to Strong City to see Mr. Harbaugh, as I had no other way of letting him know and as it seemed that A.P. did not want to get mixed up with it. I saw Mr. Harbaugh and told him what arrangements had been made and he instructed me to go ahead and he would have the sheriff there. I went back to Bazaar, and Bun Grover had gone to Kansas City and got diseased so that he could not ride, and we postponed it for a day or two, and Bun Grover thought he could ride and we agreed to go on the night of the 5th or 6th. I saw A.P. in Bazaar that day but got no chance to tell him. The sheriff came over to Bazaar between the time I notified Mr. Harbaugh at Strong City and the day we were to go and was around with the blacksmith who is his deputy and whom I helped to load cars and was on good terms with up to this time, and who was and is a good friend of Bun Grover, the joint

up and rode through the county and gathered up what we could find. We put one calf in a pasture near town and put thirteen head in the pens, but one calf we stold [sic] out and hid it between the two chutes. Gaddy, the storekeeper, was to claim it and say that he had bought it from a moover [sic], and Joe Mercer was to pretend to buy it and ship it with his cattle and give us the money.¹⁵ John Blackmore took it and shipped it with his cattle, claiming that it was his. Gaddy claimed it and proved by me that it was his, that he had bought it from a moover [sic]. Gaddy said that he had fixed with Blackmore and that he would get the money. Finney went and got the

14. Grand Summit was a cattle shipping station on the Santa Fe railroad in Cowley County, about sixty-five miles south of Cottonwood Falls. John Blackmore was a stockman who had earlier made the run into the Cherokee Outlet, then moved back to Kansas. In 1899 he was living at Cassoday, a town in Butler County about twenty-five miles south of Cottonwood Falls.

15. Joe Mercer, born 1865, a stockman living in Bazaar Township in 1900, served as secretary of the Kansas Livestock Association from 1910 to 1937. "Mover" was a term commonly applied to people passing through an area.

keeper.¹⁶ Bill Finney and I left Bazaar on horse-back about dark and Bun was to meet us with Len Muer at the pasture. Finney and I rode nearly to Matfield Green when Finney complained that his horse was lame, which she was a little. When near Matfield Green he said, "I don't believe I will go, my horse is lame." I said, "The other fellows will be waiting for us. She ain't much lame. Let's go on." He said, "No, I am going back to Bazaar. Let's put it off a while." I said, "Come on, we will go to Matfield and stay all night. I'll pay for your bed." He said, "No, I am going back to Bazaar." He turned his horse and started back. He did not ask me to go back or ask me when I was coming on or anything. I went on to Matfield and stayed all night. The next morning I went with Vandaver Beecock and helped round up the Scribner pasture. We drove the cattle to Bazaar, Arthur Crocker and I.¹⁷ I went into the joint and around town but could not find Bun Grover or Bill Finney and I have not seen them since. We agreed to drive the cattle about half way from the pasture to Grand Summit and leave them and all wait at Bazaar till Len Muer got the cars and that would give me a chance to notify Mr. Harbaugh and give him a chance to get the officers there. That night I went home with Len Muer out to his ranch. He would not talk about it and the question was not raised. I saw a change had come over him for some reason. I then went to Strong City and told Mr. Harbaugh, who told me to come away which I did and have not been back since.

While at Bazaar and during the time we were making the arrangements, Bill Finney told me that he knew where nine or ten head of cattle were that Charley Rudolph had lost. The next day I saw Charley Rudolph and he told me he had found his

16. The Chase County sheriff in 1899 was John McClellan. Names of Chase County sheriff's deputies from 1899 are not extant.

17. The Scribner pasture is about five miles east of Matfield Green. Arthur Crocker, born 1874, was an unmarried stockman in 1895 and boarding in the household of W. F. Dunlap, a stock raiser living in Bazaar Township. Crocker later would marry Daisy Brandley, the sister of his brother Edward's wife, Maud. In the early twentieth century the Crocker brothers became successful ranchers, with Flint Hills property in Butler, Chase, and Greenwood Counties, as well as extensive holdings in Texas and Arizona.

since.

While at Bazaar and during the time we were making the arrangements, Bill Finney told me that he knew where nine or ten head of cattle were that Charley Rudolph had lost. The next day I saw Charley Rudolph and he told me he had found his cattle. While at Matfield Green the Dutchman who works for Harry Bramley came to me and said, "I hear you are a protector and must stay away from you." "Who told you?" I asked. He said, "Ed Crocker."¹⁸ I saw Ed Crocker and he said he did tell the Dutchman but was just joking with him. One day Harry Bramley came to me on the street of Matfield Green and asked me if I wanted a cigar and I said I didn't care, and we had cigars and talked about different things and he asked me what kind of a six shooter I had. I told him that it was only a common one. He said, "Let me see it." "It is over at the house where I am stopping." He said, "Let us go over and see it." I said, "Come on" and we went over and looked at it. He stayed quite a while and we talked about one thing and another. Finally he said, "I was told that you were a detective." I said, "People are liable to say anything." I told him I had a little trouble at home and had to get away, until my friends fixed it up. He said, "I was told you were working up some evidence in my case but I never was afraid of you." I said, "You never heard of my asking anyone a word concerning your case, did you?" He said, "No." I told him that I never thought or cared anything about it and that if he did kill that man he had a good cause for doing it. He said, "You or I or any other man could be placed in a position where you would kill a man." He said he did not have it in for anyone in particular but the lawyer who prosecuted him. He said that this lawyer had made him out in his talk to the jury lower down than any one could be. He said that if he was convicted he was going out of the court house right there as he had a six shooter and would use it to go away; that he had made up his

18. Charley "Daddy" Rudolph was a stockman living in Matfield Green. Edward Crocker, born 1872, was a stockman living in Matfield Township in 1900 and married to Maud Brandley. Included in their household at that time were three children and seven farm laborers.

A Plucky Set-to.

Bazaar, Kan., Oct. 13, 1899.

ED LEADER: The greatest fist fight that ever occurred in Chase or adjoining counties took place in one of the pens of the stock yards here last evening. Several parties were shipping cattle when Sam Stotler, living near the county line on the Verdigris, and Evander Bocook, living at Matfield, got into a dispute over the ownership of a steer. Bocook said if Stotler would make affidavit that the steer was his or under his control, he (Bocook) would let him have it. Stotler furnished the necessary evidence and Bocook, who was on the fence, said "the steer is yours, but you are a ----! ----! ----!" Stotler returned the epithet and Bocook leaped to the ground but before recovering himself

Four days before the Furlong report was submitted, an incident occurred at the stockyards in Bazaar between cattlemen Evander Bocook and Sam Stotler. The dispute erupted over the ownership of a steer in Bocook's possession, which Stotler later proved was his. A fistfight between the two men ensued. The incident was reported in the October 19, 1899, issue of the Chase County Leader.

mind not to go to the penitentiary; that if he was acquitted he would wear the six shooter out over the lawyer's head there in the court room.

Just before I left Bazaar I went and told Frank Gaddy that I thought I could go home now as my friends had fixed up the little trouble that I had and I asked him about the calf money. He said he had not received it yet but would in a day or so and that I should write him when I get home and he would send me an express order for my share of it. I overheard [*sic*] Gaddy, Bun Grover, and Bill Finney talking about the railroad agent at Bazaar carrying the receipts of the office around in his pocket and what a snap it would be to stick him up.¹⁹ I butted in and they asked me

what I thought of it and I said it was taking too many chances. I told the agent, who roomed next to me, that if I was in his place I would be careful as I thought there were people that would knock a man down for 50 c. I discouraged the robbing of the Agent and I think it was through my efforts in this direction that they did not do it. After the sheriff's visit over at Bazaar I saw that a change had come over the blacksmith who was, up to this time, very friendly with me and was always after me when there was any cattle to load. But after this, he would speak to me and that was all. I understood that Bun Grover had sold out his joint and had left the county.

I received instructions to wait in Emporia for Mr. Harbaugh and did so. He and I went to Florence, Saturday, October 14th, and there met a committee of the Cattlemen's Association, and there received instructions as to the wishes of the Association.²⁰

Respectfully,

Furlong's Secret Service Co.,
s/ Thos. Furlong
Manager

The activities of the unidentified detective hired by the KLA to infiltrate cattle rustlers occurred during approximately two months, from the time of his first meeting with Mr. Harbaugh in Emporia on August 13, 1899, to the submission of his report to the "Cattlemen's Protective Association" on October 16. His efforts as an agent provocateur proved singularly unsuccessful: the only cattle stolen during his time in Chase County were two calves he helped steal, and at least part of the money for their sale seems likely to have made its way to the rightful owner; the attempt to steal and drive a large number of cattle to a shipping point two counties away never got under way; and a number of people suspected him to be a detective. Nonetheless, these efforts, however inept, possess a certain cultural and historical interest.

The KLA's initial suspicions obviously rested on Harry Brandley and Newt and Evander Bocook, cattlemen, and

19. The Santa Fe agent in Bazaar in 1900 was Frederick Siler, age twenty-seven.

20. Florence is a town on the Santa Fe railroad in eastern Marion County, about twenty-five miles west of Cottonwood Falls.

Henry Baker, apparently thought to have been involved as a butcher. The detective was instructed to secure a job breaking horses for Harry Brandley, and further, to attempt to befriend "a Dutchman," most likely Carl Fischer, who worked for Brandley, and engage him to help gather information. Nothing more is said about the horse-breaking job. The detective arrived in Bazaar on August 15, took a room at Frank Gaddie's boardinghouse, and for nearly a month hung around Bazaar and Matfield Green, helping load cattle onto railroad stock cars at the Bazaar stockyards, gambling, and trying to initiate contact with suspected thieves.

A bar is a likely place to seek information about nefarious dealings, and as many of the area cowboys visited Bun Grover's establishment after loading cattle, the detective also frequented it. Although he heard no talk of cattle theft during these early weeks, he was privy to proposals about robbing both a doctor from Cottonwood Falls who patronized Grover's bar and the railroad station agent. The former proposal, from Bun Grover to the detective, was the direct result of a complaint from the detective about needing money, a complaint he had been voicing regularly in an attempt to elicit an invitation to steal cattle. The latter was a conversation among Bun Grover, Frank Gaddie, and Bill Finney overheard by the detective. Neither robbery occurred—the doctor did not return to the bar, and the detective discouraged the conspirators and, with an oblique warning, put the station agent on his guard.

A discrepancy in dates occurs around the end of the first month. The detective stated that he left Bazaar and Matfield Green on September 13 to go to Emporia to meet with Harbaugh, then a few lines later said that he went to Emporia "about September 10th." The detective seemed to have been asking some leading questions of the Dutchman, because he was afraid that the Dutchman, who became drunk at Bazaar, would talk to some of the men who took him home. Thus when he learned that the Dutchman was going to a circus in Emporia, the detective decided to go also, thinking he might more easily convince him to talk if he was away from Matfield Green. Bob Brandley, however, was the only one he knew from Matfield Green and Bazaar to attend the circus.

The detective left Emporia on September 13, having been told by Harbaugh to continue his undercover work at Bazaar and Matfield Green. At this point we learn that the detective had borrowed a horse from his brother-in-law four miles east of Emporia, returning to Chase County by

detective had borrowed a horse from his brother-in-law four miles east of Emporia, returning to Chase County by riding south to the Verdigris River, where he had heard that Sam Slother (possibly Sam Stotler) and Lew McCray were stealing cattle. He discovered no evidence of theft, other than that Slother was eating fresh beef. With no way to prove that the meat came from a steer other than one of Slother's own, the detective traveled on to Bazaar and to Matfield Green, presumably by horseback. He arrived there about September 17 and took a room at William Handy's boardinghouse. For several days he attempted unsuccessfully to obtain work, discovering that "everybody seemed to be afraid of me" and having a less-than-friendly encounter with Newt Bocook. Most likely, the word was out that the detective was not an out-of-work cowboy but indeed a "protector" for the livestock association, as he was accused of being by the Dutchman.

On September 23 the detective met with A.P. (probably Axel Palmer), a prominent stockman, who was a contact for the livestock association, although based on his later actions, a somewhat reluctant contact. The detective asked A.P. to buy a horse for him, which was delivered on September 25 (what happened to the horse he had borrowed twelve days earlier from his brother-in-law is not mentioned). Apparently sometime between September 17 and 23 Bun Grover had proposed to the detective a scheme to steal two carloads of cattle (approximately fifty head) with the help of Bill Finney and Len Muer and to drive them to Grand Summit, a major southern Flint Hills cattle-shipping station on the Santa Fe in eastern Cowley County. The date for the theft was set for October 1. Sometime during the last week of September the detective and Grover rode to the pasture to look over the cattle, then rode "over the road to Grand Summit," a distance of about fifty miles, presumably to scout out the route to be taken on the drive.

After returning from this trip, the detective again made contact with A.P. so that the rancher could arrange for Chase County Sheriff John McClellan to be present to arrest the thieves. A.P., however, claimed to be too busy and suggested that the detective himself should contact Harbaugh. For some reason, unfortunately not made clear, the detective "told A.P. to write to St. Louis and what to write." He then went to Strong City to meet with Harbaugh, who said that he would make the arrangements with the sheriff. The sheriff, during the last few days of September, went to Bazaar and talked to his deputy, the blacksmith who had hired the detective to help load cattle onto the railroad



In the early twentieth century Arthur Crocker (far left) and Edward Crocker (left) established the Crocker Brothers ranching operation in the Flint Hills. According to the Furlong report, Arthur drove cattle to Bazaar with the undercover detective, and Edward may have suspected the detective was an investigator. Both Arthur and Edward married daughters of Henry Brandley and both brothers later served in the Kansas legislature.

stockcars. From that point on, the blacksmith, a close friend of Bun Grover's, became decidedly cool toward the detective.

During this same late September time period, confronted with full shipping pens at Bazaar, John Blackmore had been forced to herd his cattle at night on the surrounding prairie until he could finally load at midnight. Several head strayed in the dark. The following day the detective and Bill Finney gathered up some fifteen head but hid two calves and conspired with Frank Gaddie (and possibly with Joe Mercer, although he may not have been aware that the calves were stolen) to sell them and split the money. Blackmore found one of his calves and shipped it himself, although Gaddie claimed it and had the detective lie to back his claim. Mercer shipped the other calf with his cattle, having been told that it belonged to Gaddie. The detective was supposed to receive a share of the sale money but never did. The money from the sale of one of these calves ended up in the pocket of Blackmore, the rightful owner, and it is quite possible that he also secured the money from the second.

Before the scheduled theft was to occur, on October 1, Bun Grover contracted a venereal disease in Kansas City (probably while accompanying a load of cattle to the stockyards there), so the drive was postponed for nearly a week. On October 5 or 6 the detective and Bill Finney set out for

the pasture, where they were to meet Bun Grover and Len Muer. But just before reaching Matfield Green, Finney, noting a slight lameness in his horse, returned to Bazaar, despite the protestations of the detective, who himself failed to keep the appointment with the other two would-be rustlers. At this point the narrative becomes even more confusing than it has already been. The following morning, after spending the night in Matfield Green, the detective and Evander Bocook gathered the cattle in the Scribner pasture, and Arthur Crocker and the detective drove them to Bazaar. Once he had arrived at Bazaar, the detective unsuccessfully sought Grover and Finney. He stated in his report: "We agreed to drive the cattle about half way from the pasture to Grand Summit and leave them and all wait at Bazaar till Len Muer got the cars." During this interval the detective planned to notify Harbaugh. But were the cattle that he and Arthur Crocker drove to Bazaar the same ones that the thieves had planned to drive "half way . . . to Grand Summit"? If so, does this mean that Bocook and Crocker also were in on the conspiracy? Or, more likely, were the cattle he helped drive from the Scribner pasture simply being taken to Bazaar to be shipped to market?

Whatever the case, the detective, unable to locate Grover or Finney, accompanied Len Muer, the other member of the gang, to his ranch and spent the night with no mention being made of the theft. "I saw a change had come

over him," the detective wrote. Undoubtedly growing somewhat apprehensive, the detective returned to Strong City and reported the situation to Harbaugh, who, realizing that the detective's true identity had been determined, immediately pulled him off the case. His last official act, other than writing the report, was to meet in Florence on October 14 with a committee from the livestock association.

Obviously, the detective's mission was a failure, if not a fiasco. The fact that the Dutchman who worked for Harry Brandley had accused him of being a "protector" suggests that early on his cover was not convincing. If he was not recognized as an undercover agent from the first, then the sudden coolness of the blacksmith after the sheriff had been to Bazaar certainly indicates that his identity and mission had become known at that time. Because Bun Grover and the blacksmith were close friends, it seems plausible that the blacksmith informed Grover, who in turn told Gaddie, Finney, and Muer, which would explain Muer's aloofness and Finney's and Grover's disappearance. The regard of these Bazaar residents for legal niceties, as recounted in the detective's report, does seem less than sterling, but also it is possible that, whatever their intentions regarding the actual theft of cattle, they were deliberately leading the detective on; cowboys have been known to play some rather rough practical jokes. The later lives of Finney and Muer are unknown, but Frank Gaddie's subsequent years were those of a respected merchant and stockman at Bazaar. (When I shared this report with Gaddie's son, also named Frank, he was amused at the very idea of impropriety in his father.) As for Bun Grover, who in his youth clearly had sown a rather large field of wild oats, the detective's belief that he had sold his bar and left Chase County was totally wrong. Rather, later on in 1899 Grover acquired a wife and renounced his youthful indiscretions. The 1910 census shows him still a resident of Bazaar, a settled family man with children.

An interesting aside: the detective's report of his conversation with Harry Brandley in late September has a strong bearing on an unsolved Chase County killing, which I have examined in greater detail elsewhere. Briefly,

Harry Brandley had been indicted for the murder of a Brandley ranch hand, Frank Rinard, who, against the wishes of the family, had been courting Harry's younger sister, Pearl. Rinard, returning home from work late on the evening of July 28, 1898, was shot while unsaddling his horse, dying minutes afterward on the porch of the Brandley house, where Arthur Crocker and Bob Brandley had carried him. In March 1899 Brandley was tried in Cottonwood Falls, the trial ending in a hung jury (eleven to one for conviction). Fourteen months later, following a change of venue, he was tried again in Emporia, where he was acquitted. The exchange Brandley had with the detective, although not outright damning, nevertheless strongly suggests his guilt.²¹

In sum, given the lack of success in apprehending the gang of cattle thieves, combined with the apparent ineptitude of his operative, it is small wonder that Thomas Furlong chose not to include this case in his memoirs.



21. Jim Hoy, "A Flint Hills Mystery: The Rinard-Brandley Murder Case," in *Tallgrass Essays: Papers from the Symposium in Honor of Dr. Ramon Powers*, ed. Michael H. Hoeflich, Gayle R. Davis, and Jim Hoy (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2003), 17-26.